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Eighth Over Berlin **Round-Clock Raids Dismay Capital** **but Have Not Yet Knocked It Out**



Lapping waves of flame spread around the city to join in a blazing ring. Dirty puffs of exploding anti-aircraft shells spattered the near-cloudless sky, then faded into smoke billowing from the fires below. Explosions rocked buildings seared by flame and echoed the thunder of battle in the air. The United States Eighth Air Force was back over Berlin.

Two days after their first real blow, the Americans renewed the Battle of Berlin on March 8. The heavy bomber force was smaller this time—down from some 800 to less than 700, bearing more than 1,000 tons of bombs. But to protect the Fortresses and Liberators, 1,100 Thunderbolt, Lightning, and Mustang fighters roared into the Reich for battle. Swerving around the capital's perimeter, the tight bomber formations precision-bombed its strategic industrial targets, among them plants manufacturing ball bearings, torpedo component parts, and locomotives.

Fighters, spearheading the formations and shielding them from the sides, above, and below, lashed at the Luftwaffe's interceptors as they rose to attack and cut through the fighter screen into the heart of some formations. When the last wave of bombers turned westward from the smoking targets and flew 600 miles to their English bases, they left 38 heavies behind, shot down by fighters and ack-ack. It was a drop of 30 from the bomber losses of the first great American engagement above the Reich capital.

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Round-Clock Raids

But the Luftwaffe was hurt nearly as badly as before: it lost 125 fighters.

A day later the Eighth was back again—but unopposed. A cloud bank 20,000 feet high blanketed Berlin and held German fighters grounded on their fields. Little hampered by the ground barrage, the heavies rained explosives and incendiaries through the clouds. Shorn of fighter support, Berlin suffered its worst daylight raid. The Americans did not claim a single German fighter shot down, and the Eighth's bomber losses fell to a low of seven.

Sun and Shadow: American and British newspaper accounts of the Battle of Berlin were somewhat misleading. British publications exaggerated the number of United States planes participating and the tonnage of bombs dropped. Their excuse was that they had not received proper guidance from American headquarters. Papers in the United States played up the raids as if Berlin had been completely knocked out and a final evacuation were under way. The reports these stories were based on were extremely dubious, and the German High Command communiqué, which at least is a good guide to what the Nazis are telling their own public, pictured the battles over Berlin as great defensive victories for the Luftwaffe.

A sober account of Berlin's reaction to the American daylight attacks was cabled by NEWSWEEK's Stockholm correspondent:

"Comparing the American raids with RAF incursions, it was certainly a great shock to Berliners to find their city now open to round-the-clock bombing. But the sparse reports reaching here indicate that the American raids, by the very fact that they are carried out during daylight hours, don't cause half the fright of RAF raids—when fires provide the only light, the bombed-out shiver in the cold, and the people's morale is generally at low ebb. Berliners say: 'We don't mind the Yanks who come when the sun shines and it's warm. It's the Tommies sneaking in at night that we don't like so much.'"